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DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE CONSIDERS QUESTIONS OF GIBRALTAR AND EAST TIMOR

The Special Committee on decolonization this morning considered the questions of Gibraltar and East Timor.

On Gibraltar it decided, given the developing situation, to continue consideration at its next session, subject to any directives the General Assembly might issue in that regard and to transmit all relevant documents to the Assembly to facilitate examination of the question by the Fourth Committee (Decolonization).

Concerning East Timor, the representative of Indonesia made a statement. The Committee then heard petitioners from the following 10 organizations: the Hobart East Timor Committee; Parliamentarians for East Timor; Wolfson College; the House of Councillors of Japan; TAPOL, the Indonesian Human Rights Campaign; Amnesty International; the Free East Timor Japan Coalition; the Association de Solidarite avec Timor Oriental; the Association for Threatened Peoples; as well as a Portuguese member of the European Parliament and a member of the Portuguese Parliament.

The Committee will meet again at 3 p.m. today to continue consideration of the question.

Working Paper on Gibraltar

The Secretariat working paper on Gibraltar (document A/AC.109/963) states that the General Assembly noted in 1987 that the Foreign Ministers of Spain and the United Kingdom met in December 1985 and January 1987 as part of the negotiating process aimed at overcoming their differences over Gibraltar, and urged both Governments to continue the process with the object of reaching a definitive solution to the problem.

As to recent developments, the paper summarizes statements made by Spanish and British political leaders on the future of the Territory. It cites the opposition of Gibraltar's Chief Minister to the Brussels Declaration of 1984, by which Spain and the United Kingdom announced their intention to

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follow a policy of decolonization. The agreement reached by the two countries in December 1987 on the use of the Gibraltar airport, which is situated on an isthmus whose sovereignty is in dispute, is also reviewed in the paper.

With regard to economic conditions in the Territory, the paper says Gibraltar has no known natural resources. It mentions the financial assistance provided to the Territory for 1987-1991 by the British Government, amounting to £40 million. Capital development projects are funded partly through borrowing, raising general revenues or through assistance funds provided by the Government of the United Kingdom.

Working Paper on East Timor

The Secretariat paper on East Timor (document A/AC.109/961) reviews consideration of the question by the United Nations and summarizes political developments. According to reports in August 1987, there was a marked increase in the Indonesian military presence in the Territory during July 1987; there were some 13,000 to 15,000 Indonesian troops there in 20 infantry battalions. The Centre for Strategic and International Studies, a research agency at Jakarta, estimated the strength of the Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor (FRETILIN) at 1,500 men, as compared to 800 to 1,000 Indonesian soldiers in four battalions.

As to the human rights situation, the report states that although human rights abuses continued, in 1987 modest improvements were made in several areas. They included the release from detention of many East Timorese previously suspected of supporting a small-scale insurgency.

According to the paper, observers believed the number of disappearances was very small and they were believed to be at the hands of security or military authorities. Reports were often unspecific and virtually impossible to confirm as the Government rarely responded to inquiries concerning disappearances. One international human rights group reported in March 1987 that 10 East Timorese, previously believed to have disappeared, were found alive, while unconfirmed reports claimed several Timorese had disappeared in 1987. Forced entry by security agencies occurred periodically.

Restrictions existed on movement to and within the Territory, the paper states. The Government considered outside investigations of alleged human rights violations to be interference in its internal affairs. Amnesty International representatives, Asia Watch and other international human rights groups had been refused access. However, under a 1985 agreement with the Government, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) conducts regular visits to jailed prisoners and provides medical and food aid to persons returned from Ataúro Islands. But the Indonesian Government continues to permit nothing but selective access to the Territory.

According to an Australian source, the situation in East Timor remained essentially one of deep social discord and conflict, resulting partly from the systematic Indonesianization of the economy, culture and political system and the severe curtailment of basic freedoms and civil, political and cultural

rights, the paper notes. A Dutch member of the European Parliamentary Council who visited the Territory in January 1988 reported that he had found no evidence to justify allegations that there were human rights violations in East Timor. He considered the situation there to be normal and stated that there were no problems with security.

Regarding economic and social conditions, the paper notes that since 1977, the Portuguese Government had apprised the Secretary-General of the fact that, owing to the conditions prevailing in East Timor, it was not possible to transmit information called for under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations. Consequently, the information contained in that section was derived from published reports and press releases of the Permanent Mission of Indonesia. In that context, according to the "Governor" of East Timor, who had been sworn in by the Indonesian Minister for Home Affairs, from 1983 to 1986, the per capita income of the East Timorese had increased by an average of 4.07 per cent annually, as compared to Indonesia's national average of 3.5 per cent. According to the Chief Minister of Australia's Northern Territory, who visited East Timor for a week in August 1987, there had been dramatic improvement in education, literacy and communications.

The report states that according to the "Governor", in conformity with the Indonesian Constitution, all aspects of Timorese culture, which essentially displays a fusion between the indigenous and the Portuguese heritage, are fully protected, respected and practised without restriction.

AMIN RIANOM (Indonesia) said his Government's stand, as set forth in the letters appearing in documents A/AC.109/951 and Add.1-2, also applied to aide-memoire 26/28 of 11 August, which acceded to the request for a hearing by petitioners on the so-called question of East Timor.

Indonesia firmly opposed any discussion of that so-called question, he continued. The process of decolonizing East Timor had unfolded in accordance with the provisions of the Charter and General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV). Thus, the Territory's colonial status had been ended, and on 17 July 1976 it had become the twenty-seventh province of the Republic of Indonesia.

For 12 years, he went on, the people of that province had been living in peace and prosperity. Consideration of the question by the Committee constituted interference in the internal affairs of Indonesia, a sovereign Member State of the United Nations.

Statements by Petitioners

ANDREW WELLS, of the Hobart East Timor Committee, retraced what he said was the "sad history" of Indonesia's occupation of East Timor. He welcomed the many initiatives of private groups or international organizations on behalf of the Territory, and said there was growing sympathy for the cause among the Indonesian population. Drawing attention to the increased economic

cost of the occupation, he said Indonesia's withdrawal, accompanied by a temporary Portuguese administration prior to the establishment in East Timor of an elected government, was therefore in everyone's interest.

DIANA QUICK, of Parliamentarians for East Timor, said her organization was engaged in consultations and other activities to promote a just solution to the question of East Timor. Intensive consultations had taken place in Portugal, with members of the organization exchanging views with parliamentarians as well as Portuguese and Timorese leaders.

Her organization felt that the negotiations called for under General Assembly resolution 37/30 would not lead to a just settlement unless they involved Timorese representatives and included an act of self-determination verified by international observers, she continued. Conditions currently favoured a peaceful solution to the problem. The Secretary-General should take positive steps towards bringing an end to it. She called on the Committee to act in that regard.

During the visit, she said, the parliamentarians had taken note of the commitment of the President and Government of Portugal to the inalienable right of the people of East Timor to self-determination. There had been numerous human rights abuses and massacres of the Timorese. The 12 member States of the European Economic Community (EEC) should support the position of Portugal at the forthcoming session of the General Assembly.

ALEXANDER GEORGE, of Wolfson College, lamented the fact that the great Powers, Western ones in particular, were not interested in the fate of East Timor, nor had they reacted to the Indonesian invasion. He denounced the United Kingdom's financial aid to Indonesia, drawing attention to the sale of British military equipment to the Indonesian Government. The Timorese were being subjugated with the machinery of war provided by the United Kingdom and its allies, he said. The tragedy of East Timor was the result of a gap between a country's moral obligations and material interests, he added.

KOZABURO YAMADA, of the House of Councillors of Japan, said he deplored the past occupation of East Timor by Japan. He denounced Indonesia's current occupation of the Territory and drew attention to the striking contrast between the situation in East Timor and the "happy" fate of the Seychelles.

Japan had furnished economic aid to Indonesia, he continued. Japan, in accordance with its commitment to peace, called on Indonesia, a country with which it enjoyed close and friendly relations, to abandon its hold over East Timor. The principal party concerned -- the Timorese people -- should take part in peace negotiations.

JONATHAN HEAD, of TAPOL, the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign, said East Timor remained one of the most inaccessible areas in the world. There were no signs that it would be more open in the near future. He was concerned, about the economic situation in the Territory. The huge amount of money the

Indonesian authorities boasted of having invested in development had been gobbled up by corruption. East Timor was being run like a garrison. The daily life of every Timorese was in the iron grip of military intelligence.

ISABELLE JACQUES, of Amnesty International, said her organization took no position on the question of self-determination of East Timor; its concerns were purely humanitarian. Reported cases of human rights violations in the Territory were fewer than in the past, particularly during 1983-1984. Continued vigilance was called for, however, since the collection of information remained difficult because of lack of access to the Territory. Until such time as the Territory was open to outside observers, it would be difficult to accept assurances by the Indonesian Government that the rights of the East Timorese were fully accepted, despite the decreased number of unorthodox trials, disappearances and torture.

Amnesty International recognized that the situation in East Timor had improved, but felt that human rights violations were continuing, she went on. Indonesia should provide relevant information on those violations and punish their perpetrators, so that there would be no further acts of that nature.

KIKOYO FURUSAWA, of the Free East Timor Japan Coalition, said her organization was working to press the Japanese Government to end its support for the Indonesian policy in East Timor and to promote peace talks on the question.

She said she deplored the fact that in the United Nations Japan had continued to vote against the resolution on the Territory but had chosen to maintain good relations with Indonesia rather than to support the right to self-determination of the Timorese people. Public aid to development given by Japan to Indonesia had only increased, even after the invasion of East Timor. Japan depended on Indonesia for about 10 per cent of its oil, as well as for various minerals and metals. On the other hand, Indonesia bought products necessary for its industrialization from Japan. Japan was Indonesia's biggest trading partner.

MICHEL ROBERT, of the Association de Solidarité avec Timor Oriental, said the statements by Indonesian authorities that the situation in East Timor was normal were invalid and based on a deliberate attempt to deceive the international community. Certain comments by the few visitors to East Timor, taken out of context, would not mask the tragedy being lived by the Timorese people; all visits were planned by the Indonesian authorities. How could one claim that everything was normal and, at the same time, block information and emphasize military operations? he asked.

Indonesia's military occupation and presence was increasingly colonial in nature, from the economic, social, cultural and political viewpoints, at the expense of the Timorese people, he continued. The Timorese were systematically excluded, edged out and deprived of power. Glaring human rights violations continued.

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The colonial situation in East Timor must cease, he said and welcomed the positions taken by the Portuguese authorities, notably President Mario Soares, who spoke of the inalienable right to independence of the martyred people of East Timor. He mentioned the resolution proposed to the Parity Assembly of the Countries of Africa, Caribbean and Pacific and the European Economic Community (EEC) of September-October 1987. Expressing his concern that the people of East Timor not fall into the shadows of history, and stressing Indonesia's intransigence, he said a consultative opinion of the International Court of Justice would perhaps enable the situation to be unblocked.

KLEMENS LUDWIG, of the Society for Threatened Peoples, spoke of the role of the press in the conflict in East Timor. He said Indonesia had adopted a clever policy consisting of granting permits to journalists who were especially favourable to its policy. Others were not allowed access.

Most of the journalists who obtained permits to visit East Timor played the game of the Jakarta military authorities, he continued. In that context, he cited Barbara Crossette, correspondent for The New York Times, who had visited the Territory in June 1985 and who never explained, in an article published 19 July 1985 on the front page, that the Indonesian authorities had prevented her from seeing the truth.

He accused the journalist of writing just what the Indonesians wanted to read: that she had witnessed the progress brought to East Timor by Indonesia. He criticized her cynicism and opportunism, and mentioned other cases of journalists who had been guided by the same spirit.

FRANCISCO LUCAS PIRES, member of the European Parliament, stressed the intransigence of Indonesia, which had claimed that Portugal was responsible for the situation. That was not the issue: Portugal did not claim rights to the Territory; it claimed the rights of East Timor and its people. Those rights were inalienable and could not be haggled over. Indonesia's argument that the end of colonization had left a gap was fallacious and could not, in any case, justify a new colonial situation.

Indonesia, he continued, had neither reason nor right on its side. The re-establishment of peace in the Territory presupposed an end to the military occupation, the establishment of fundamental freedoms, freedom of movement and information in reports with the outside world, and basic structures for consultation and the self-determination of the population. A charter of minimal rights and guarantees should be adopted for the inhabitants of East Timor, drawn up by the parties concerned and subject to international verification. That charter could be a sort of preamble to any future political development of the Territory and its population, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations. If, in the case of East Timor, a historical and cultural responsibility had made Portugal the natural advocate -- rather than the negotiator, in the political sense -- of the right of the Timorese people, the legal values in question were none the less universal. They were contained in the United Nations Charter. The Organization should continue its efforts to having those values respected and honoured in East Timor.

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CARLOS ENCARNACAO, member of the Portuguese Parliament, said that despite the military occupation and attempts to exterminate the Timorese, Indonesia had not achieved its goals in East Timor. He accused the Indonesian Government of resorting to new methods to destroy the identity of the Timorese people and integrate it by force. In the context of that new campaign, the islands had become prisons; villages, concentration camps. Entire communities had been displaced by force. The most basic human rights had been constantly disregarded.

Portugal had often reiterated that it had no claims on East Timor, he continued. The Portuguese Constitution contained a provision affirming the right to self-determination of the people of East Timor. Only a consultation in conformity with United Nations principles and under the Organization's control would enable the people of East Timor to express freely their will and to exercise their right to self-determination.

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